

VZCZCXRO2973

RR RUEHLN RUEHVK RUEHYG

DE RUEHDBU #1454 3361322

ZNR UUUUU ZZH

R 011322Z DEC 08

FM AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 1218

INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE

RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 0346

RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 0253

RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC 0242

RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

UNCLAS DUSHANBE 001454

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [UZ](#) [TI](#)

SUBJECT: UNEXPECTED CLOSURE OF TAJIK BORDER BY UZBEKISTAN

¶1. (SBU) According to news reports, Uzbek authorities unilaterally closed their border with Tajikistan beginning on November 27. The Tajik State Committee for National Security said it had no warning of this move from the Uzbeks. The Uzbek Embassy in Dushanbe also seemed not to know the reasons for the closure, and announced that it was working with the Tajik MFA to resolve the problem. Post has heard an uncorroborated rumor of a large drug seizure on the Uzbek side of the border near Tursunzade around November 26, involving a drug shipment which had just exited Tajikistan, but has no information that this is the reason behind the closure.

¶2. (SBU) According to press reports, only diplomatic passport holders, Russian citizens, and Tajik citizens crossing back into Tajikistan are allowed through Uzbek border crossings. Emboffs traveling November 27-30 between Tashkent and Khujand encountered no delays in either direction. Embassy FSN staff and American Foreign Service staff crossing into Uzbekistan on November 27 for tourism were briefly delayed when Uzbek border guards refused to let the Tajik members of the party enter Uzbekistan. However, the border guards relented after some discussion with the American member of the party and intervention by the party's Uzbek tour operator. The party encountered no delays when it returned to Tajikistan on November 30.

¶3. (SBU) Tajik media speculated that the restrictions on border crossing were linked to preparations for celebrations to mark Uzbekistan's December 8 Constitution Day. A source at the Tajik Ministry of Foreign Affairs said the closure was "a big mystery to us," and that the Uzbeks had made no explanation to the Tajik government. The source noted that this was the first time Uzbekistan had closed the border for Constitution Day.

¶4. (SBU) Comment: Regional governments commonly close borders in advance of major public events such as summit meetings or holidays. Post has no solid information to explain this latest border closure, which has disrupted commerce and the personal travel of many Tajiks.

End Comment.